WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1   1.   A data structure for providing a catalog from a manufacturer to a customer

2   comprising:

3   a catalog header portion;

4   a system identification portion, the system identification portion including a system

5   type indicator, the system type indicator indicating whether a system is a

6   bundled system or a custom system, and;

7   a system option portion.

2.   The data structure of claim 1 wherein the catalog header portion applies to an

entire catalog.

1   3.   The data structure of claim 1 wherein the system identification portion

2   includes a plurality of business rule elements that apply to a particular system

1   4.   The data structure of claim 3 wherein the plurality of business rule elements

2   include a system identification element, the system identification element providing a

3   manufacture assigned unique identifier.

1   5.   The data structure of claim 3 wherein the plurality of business rule elements

2   include a system identification effective date element, the system identification effective date

3   element providing an effective date that a particular configuration is allowed to be purchased.

1   6.   The data structure of claim 3 wherein the plurality of business rule elements

2   include a system identification action element, the system identification action element

3   programmably informing a customer what function to perform on a system.

1   7.   The data structure of claim 6 wherein the functions to be performed include an

2   add function, a replace function and a discontinue function.

1   8.   The data structure of claim 1 wherein the system option portion includes a

2   plurality of relationship indicator elements.

9.   The data structure of claim 8 wherein the plurality of relationship indicator elements include a relationship identification element, the relationship identification element providing an indicator that communicates for a component, a relationship of the component to other components.

10.   A data structure for acknowledging receipt a catalog by a customer to a manufacturer comprising:

    an acknowledgement header portion, the acknowledgement header portion including a

        reference identification element referencing a catalog containing custom

        systems; and

    an acknowledgement detail portion.

11.   The data structure of claim 10 wherein the acknowledgement header portion applies to an entire catalog.

12.   The data structure of claim 10 wherein the acknowledgement header portion includes a reference identification element, the reference identification element providing a reference to a catalog number corresponding to a catalog number from the catalog for which receipt is acknowledged.

13.   The data structure of claim 10 wherein the acknowledgement header portion includes an acknowledgement version number element, and acknowledgement date element.

14.   A data structure for providing an order from a customer to a manufacturer using a catalog that includes custom systems, the data structure comprising:

    an order header portion;

    an order detail portion, the order detail portion including information about a specific

        configuration for the order; and,

    an option detail portion, the option detail portion including information allowing

        ordering of a custom system.

15.   The data structure of claim 10 wherein the order header portion applies to a plurality of orders.

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1   16.   The data structure of claim 10 wherein the order header portion includes a

2   planned ship code element, the planned ship code element enabling a customer to request a

3   ship date of less than a contracted lead time.

1   17.   The data structure of claim 14 wherein the option detail portion includes an

2   option indicator element, the option indicator element indicating types of options being

3   ordered.

1   18.   The data structure of claim 14 wherein the option detail portion includes an

2   option count element, the option count element indicating how many options are being

3   ordered.

1   19.   The data structure of claim 14 wherein the option detail portion includes an

2   option action element, the option action element indicating what action is being used to

3   include a particular option in the order.

1   20.   A data structure for acknowledging receipt an order by a customer to a

2   manufacturer comprising:

3   an acknowledgement header portion, the acknowledgement header portion including a

4   reference identification element referencing a custom order; and

5   an acknowledgement detail portion.